CONFIRMATION

REV. FRANCIS MORSE M.A.

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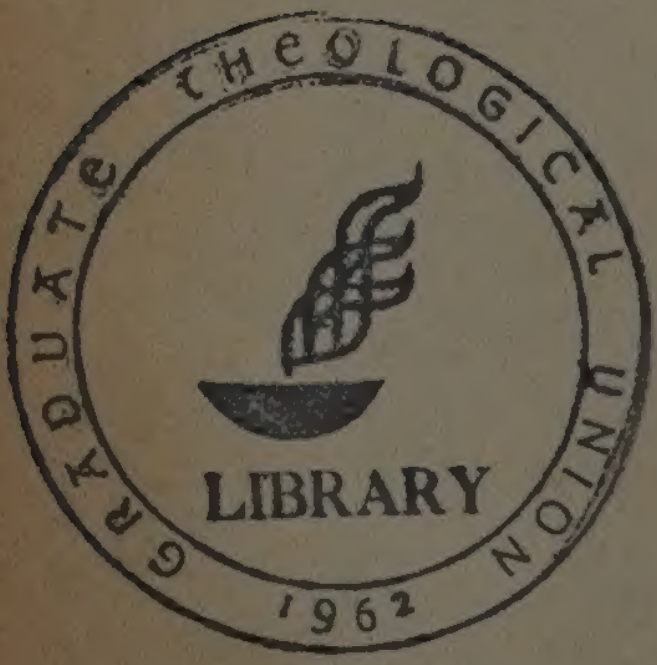

Confirmation:

WHAT IT IS, AND WHAT IT REQUIRES.

In Nine Addresses

BY THE

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I.

WHAT CONFIRMATION IS.

Confirmation.

WHAT CONFIRMATION IS.

Jeremiah l. 5.

"They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten."

THESE striking words were written to picture out the starting of the Israelites on their return from captivity in Babylon to their homes in Jerusalem. That return and the prophetic words which tell of it are also pictures of Christian times and of the coming of penitent and earnest souls to seek and find their rest in Jesus Christ

their Saviour. Jeremiah's words are thus exactly applicable to those who are now seeking Confirmation. Their faces are Zionward. They are asking the way to Jesus their Lord, their rest, and their home, and resolving to join themselves to Him in a perpetual Covenant that shall never be forgotten. I place these words, therefore, at the head of these addresses in the hope that from their beauty they may strike the eye, and possibly touch the heart, of some one who may open the Book.

The subject of this first address is Confirmation itself, what it is, what reasons lead us to practise it, and what duties follow it.

I. What is Confirmation?

It is a rite of the Church in which those persons, mostly those young persons, who have been baptized, and are now come to years of discretion and are religiously disposed, come forward, after careful instruction, for the double purpose of "confirming" and "being confirmed"; that is, Of confirming *themselves* their baptismal promises; and of being confirmed by *God* in their baptismal privileges.

Each one of them for himself *confirms* his own baptismal promises in the words

he has to say aloud—"I do"—in answer to the Bishop's question,

"Do ye here, in the presence of God, and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at your Baptism; ratifying and confirming the same in your own persons, and acknowledging yourselves bound to believe, and to do, all those things which your Godfathers and Godmothers then undertook for you?"

And they all, one by one, have the visible sign and seal of God's favour and gracious goodness towards them, to *confirm* them in their baptismal privileges, when after prayer the Bishop lays his hand on each one and says: "Defend, O Lord, this Thy Child with Thy heavenly grace that he may continue Thine for ever; and daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit more and more until he come unto Thine everlasting kingdom."

Thus in a double sense the rite is called *Confirmation*, expressing alike what *we confirm* and what *God confirms*.

It is also called "*The laying on of hands.*"

The laying on of hands is an ancient Scriptural custom used to indicate the "*conveyance* of *blessing from God.*"

Thus when Jacob would bless the two

sons of Joseph, he laid his hands upon each of them and said: "God, before whom my Fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." Gen. xlviii 15, 16.

Our Lord Himself followed this example, for in blessing little children, "He took them up in His arms, laid His hands upon them and blessed them." Mark x. 16.

And the Apostles in the conveyance of the miraculous gift of the Holy Ghost were accustomed to do the same, as in the case of Peter and John at Samaria. "Who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. Then laid they their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost." Acts viii. 15, 17.

Thus, then, from each of the names, whether "Confirmation" or "Laying on of hands," we gather this to be the meaning of this ordinance; it is a rite of the Church in which baptized persons confirm their baptismal vows, and are confirmed in their baptismal privileges; are separated unto, and are blessed of, God.

Confirmation is also called by the Church of Rome a Sacrament. But it is not a

Sacrament according to our definition of the word Sacrament, because though an outward sign and an inward grace belong to it, it was not appointed by Christ Himself

II. This brings us to our second question, "Why, then, does our Church practise this rite of Confirmation?"

She does so—

1. "Because," as is expressed in the Service, it is "after the example of the Holy Apostles."

"We make our humble supplications unto Thee"—so runs the Bishop's prayer—"for these Thy servants, upon whom (after the example of Thy Holy Apostles) we have now laid our hands, to certify them, by this sign, of Thy favour and gracious goodness towards them."

This example is recorded in the following passages—

(*a*) "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

"And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

"For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were pos-

sessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

"And there was great joy in that city."

"But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."

"Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:" . . .

"Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." Acts viii. 5—9, 12, 14, 15, 17.

Observe,—they heard the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, they saw the miracles, they believed themselves and were baptised. Then the Apostles came, laid their hands upon them with prayer, and they received the Holy Ghost. After this example, when *you* have been instructed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and become believers in Him, and have been baptized,—for these, in whatever order they come, are the essential preparatives for Confirmation,—then the Bishop, like the Apostles, comes and with prayer lays his hands upon you, to assure you of God's gracious goodness to bestow

upon you the gift of the Holy Ghost; and that gift, not the less real, because, not now in His miraculous, but only in His ordinary, influence of Christian graces and powers.

(*b*) There is a similar statement, with reference to the Ephesians, in a subsequent chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

"It came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied." Acts xix. 1—7.

(*c*) The doctrine of "laying on of hands," which from its position can hardly be interpreted of any other than this of what

we call Confirmation, is mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews among the "foundations of the doctrine of Christ."

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of *laying on of hands*, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." **Heb. vi. 1, 2.**

2. The Church of England practises the rite of Confirmation also, because, as the sixtieth Canon of the Church expresses it, —"It has been a solemn, ancient, and laudable custom in the Church of God, continued from the apostles' times, that all bishops should lay their hands upon children baptized and instructed in the catechism of the Christian religion, praying over them and blessing them, which is called Confirmation."

3. She practises it, thirdly, because it gives a definite opportunity at a most important season of life, for the decided choice, and public confession, of Jesus Christ. It is thus the natural complement of Infant Baptism, the spiritual coming of age, when the young Christian, not only "with the heart believeth unto righteousness," but

"with the mouth maketh confession unto salvation." Rom. x. 10.

I should like to ask any one who objects to Confirmation whether he could devise anything more sensible than this; anything better adapted to the need; anything more likely to fix a young person in his faith, and to secure him, as he enters upon active life, for the Lord's service.

A Covenant, to which God in Holy Scripture gives him an invitation and a right, has been made for him at his Baptism. But now he has come to years when he can understand it, and he must consent to it of his own will, and with his own mouth, or it can now be no longer of avail to him. But when shall he do so? We know he *may* do it at any time. But what may be done at any time is commonly done at no time, especially if it is anything we shrink from. And all men, young ones especially, shrink from decision in religion, shrink particularly from any public profession of such decision.

Just at this time, then, when one is wishing, but not quite daring, to confess Christ openly and in public, he needs to be invited and encouraged; he needs the affectionate friendship, and the gentle pressure of those older than himself; he needs the

sympathy of numbers; he needs above all some definitely fixed time, and place, and way, which, when once decided for him, makes his effort easier.

And just at this time in his experience, comes the repeated notice of an approaching Confirmation, a call in itself Sunday after Sunday from God to his conscience; and then parents speak of it; and friends speak of it; and the clergyman speaks of it, in private as in public.

And so a little help here and a little there encourages one and another to come forward as a candidate; and then under earnest and affectionate instruction many make up their minds that it would be a very happy thing to be brave Christians, and so when the day comes they solemnly pledge themselves to be such, amidst the prayers of the Congregation, and in the face of all men.

It is urged, I am well aware, against Confirmation, that some come to it ill-prepared, and so take harm rather than good from it themselves, and bring scandal rather than honour to the Christian name.

Alas, this is the case in all Christian ordinances.

Some come, we know, to the Lord's Supper and eat and drink unworthily

to their own condemnation. But are we therefore to cease administering the Lord's Supper, which is so great a blessing to those who worthily partake of it? Some come to church for other purposes than prayer and praise. Are we therefore to close the churches altogether, even to those who come to pray and to praise?

We are not to give up means of grace because some abuse them. We take all pains to teach and examine our candidates for Confirmation; but we cannot read all hearts, or all, indeed, of any heart. We must leave that to God alone. But there are no means of grace which God more blesses than Confirmation, and if some abuse it, many have reason to thank God for it all the days of their life, and will have throughout all the ages of eternity.

III. What then is required of persons to be confirmed?

1. That they have been baptized, that they have come to years of discretion, and that they know, and understand, the Church Catechism.

2. That they have used their privileges, and made their Baptism a reality; that they are penitent, trusting, striving souls, and so, indeed, may be in every sense

pronounced "regenerate," as they are in the Confirmation Service; and that thus of their own will they come forward, asking for this further privilege.

3. That they make special preparation of heart and mind for this solemn rite, obeying God's Word, which bids us "Prepare to meet thy God" (Amos iv. 12); and trusting in His promise, which assures us "Thou meetest those that remember Thee in Thy ways" (Isa. lxiv. 5).

And now let me ask any one in whose hands this book may be placed, who has not yet made any decided stand for Christ and His religion, who comes to church it may be and is interested and perhaps attracted to wish for, though not yet to take some further steps towards a religious life—Do you think you will ever have a better opportunity than this, of the approaching Confirmation, for stopping in a career of thoughtlessness, with which indeed you are not satisfied, and turning heart and soul to live for God? Here is at hand a definitely fixed opportunity. Here is a time-hallowed ordinance after the example of the Apostles. Here are sympathising companions daring, as I hope you will dare, to confess and not to be ashamed of Christ. Everything conspires to help you,

and never again will it be so easy for you as now. Like those spoken of by Jeremiah, in the words at the head of this address, your faces are Zionward or you would not have read thus far. You are inquiring the way thither, or you would not be thus patiently bearing with my attempt to show it you. Will you go on with the words and say now, one to another, brother to sister, friend to friend, "Come" *now* "and let *us* join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten?"

Oh, if you have any such desire, as you love your life do not let it be quenched. It comes from God's Holy Spirit striving with your soul: do not bid Him be silent. Let your clergyman at once have your name as a candidate. All depends upon speedy and decided action; once having made the resolve, once having pledged yourself to God, you will find the next steps comparatively easy.

Let me give you an example from a soldier's life. When the great Duke of Wellington was a very young man and had just entered the army, he was quartered at Dublin, and was spending his life in idleness and gaiety amidst the attractions of that city. Suddenly there came an order for his regiment to go to India. Young

Wellesley was altogether disconcerted at the thought of having to give up his enjoyments in the best of Irish society. His first thought was to sell out. His second and his better thought was to consult an older friend whom he happily had near him in the Duke of Richmond. The Duke said, "Go home and think well over the whole question, and come to me again to-morrow." He went home. He thought of it all night. He came back again and said, "I will go to India; and I will be a soldier yet."

Are you, in your best days, thus living a life of thoughtlessness, of pleasure, if not of sin? And as you now read the order from the King to go forth and fight your Lord's battles, in a land far off from such occupation, are you saddened, vexed, inclined to evade the order? Follow the great soldier's example, for you too are a soldier. Go and be alone with God. Think well over, on your knees, what will be the consequence of putting off His order now: what will be the result of now yielding to it; and then and there, God helping you, resolve, and let your Confirmation tell out to the world your resolution,

"I will go where Christ my Lord is bidding me. I will be Christ's soldier yet."

II.

PRIVILEGES OF CHRISTIANS.

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St. John x. 4.

"And when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him."

ONE of the most attractive views of Confirmation is that in which it represents Christ's putting forth His own into action. He comes by invitations, and sermons, and earnest teachings, to arouse those who are lying like sheep inactive in the fold, and to thrust them forth into the open confession and active service of their Lord. It requires some pressure upon their hearts and consciences to effect this; and so much is exactly expressed in the words of St. John before us. "When He *putteth* forth" is

rather "When he *thrusteth* forth." There is a certain amount of gentle force used. The sheep is so much at ease and at home in the fold that it is unwilling, unless pressed, to rise and go out. But it is good for Christ's sheep that they should be thus aroused and thrust out into active Christian life. They are "His own," and He will do what is best for them. He will thrust out His own. But observe what He will also do at the same time for their encouragement and protection.

He will go before them Himself. This is the picture, and this is the thought, with which I would attract any one who is thinking of being confirmed.

The Lord is pressing you into His active service in the world; but He would have you start with a clear sense of your privileges. You are His own, and He is going before you.

This is the first thought expressed in the Church Catechism, the leading points of which I am now proposing to examine with those who are candidates for Confirmation. It begins by setting forth the *privileges of a Christian.* For notice the two first questions and answers. They are as follows: "What is your name?" "N. or M." "Who gave you this name?" "My Godfathers and God-

mothers in my Baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."

The Christian is in right and title "a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." He is one of Christ's own.

The teaching of the Church is thus at one with the words of Christ. In sending forth her young disciples into the world she would send them forth with a full sense of their privileges as Christ's own, His members, God's children, heirs of Heaven, joint-heirs with Him who is leading them there.

I desire—

1. To compare with Holy Scripture, and to illustrate, this statement of the Church Catechism concerning our privileges as being Christ's own.

2. To dwell on these privileges as encouragements to come forth at the Saviour's bidding and to follow Him.

The statement is this, which is put into each of our mouths, in answer to the question, "Who gave you this name?"—"My Godfathers and my Godmothers in my Baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."

Each of these expressions denoting our relation to Christ and to God is taken from Holy Scripture and is there connected with Baptism.

That thus we become members (limbs, that is, in a spiritual sense) of Christ's body is thus stated; "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body," "for the body is not one member, but many." "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." 1 Cor xii. 13, 14, 27.

That thus, likewise, becoming members of Christ the Son of God, we become the children of God, is with equal clearness announced: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Gal. iii. 26, 27.

And for the last expression, "inheritors of the kingdom of heaven," we have the terse and striking words of St. Paul, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Rom. viii. 17.

All these privileges flow out of the one great gift of the Holy Ghost, of the gift of whom at Baptism St. Peter speaks in these strong words; "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts ii. 38, 39.

Thus the language of the Catechism is the language of Holy Scripture on the subject of Christian privileges being made ours in Baptism.

But this needs explanation, lest we presume on privileges *given*, if I may so say, but not *taken*. Baptism is a Sacrament, or solemn covenant between God and man. The force and efficacy of Sacraments is perhaps better expressed in a sentence from one of the Homilies than elsewhere. "In Sacraments," it is there written, "God embraces us, and offers Himself to be embraced by us."

Thus the Baptism of infants is exactly parallel to our Lord's taking little children in His arms (St. Mark x. 16), embracing them, and offering Himself to be embraced by them. If they are but little infants they can only passively receive Him; but as soon as they are old enough they can either take hold of Him and hold Him, or shake themselves from His embrace and leave Him. And if, when we, who have been embraced by Him as infants in our Baptism, become old enough to understand Christ's gift of Himself to us, we do not

ourselves take it making our will in receiving one with His will in giving, then His gift not being taken can avail us nothing.

This is expressed by St. John in such words as the following :

"As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name : which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (St. John i. 12, 13).

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life : and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (St. John iii. 36).

"He that hath the Son hath life ; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John v. 12).

That these privileges, however, of which we have been speaking, have been really taken by, as well as given to, the duly prepared candidate for Confirmation, is assumed in one of the prayers, the first in the Confirmation Service, which begins thus :

"Almighty and everlasting God, who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these Thy servants by Water and the Holy Ghost, and hast given unto them forgiveness of all their sins ; strengthen them, we beseech Thee, O Lord, with the Holy Ghost the

Comforter, and daily increase in them Thy manifold gifts of grace . . . "

These truths may be put in another way. Baptism is a solemn covenant signed and sealed of God, and made with each individual who is baptized. It is the appointment of Christ Himself to assure us of our adoption by God. "Go ye" (He said) "and make Christians of all nations" (by) "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (St. Matt. xxviii. 19).

Let us look at a similar case in transactions between man and man. Suppose I say to you, "I give you my house." That, like the promises of forgiveness and acceptance in Holy Scripture, puts it in your power to accept and appropriate the gift if you will. But that does not convey it to you. For the purpose of conveyance, and for making it legally and actually, and to your own conviction, yours, you need a deed of conveyance duly signed and sealed by him who has the right of conveying it to you. Baptism is like such a deed of conveyance of God's adoption, signed and sealed by Christ Himself, who alone has power to convey it to you.

Now suppose, further, that you have thus by a deed of conveyance obtained *rightful*

possession of my house thus offered you, but that, neglectful of its value, you do not take *actual* possession of it; suppose that you neither live in it, nor let it, but leave it, as of no value, to itself. You know the consequences. It will become a ruin itself, and a disgrace, rather than a valuable possession, to you. It will still be yours indeed, and you can take up its rights and uses, all injured, however, by your neglect, and needing much trouble to restore, if you determine to do so; but such as it has become and is now through your neglect it will not cover your head nor give you shelter. You cannot rest in it at night nor start from it by day refreshed for your daily toil.

And such is the position of the man to whom by Baptism has been conveyed the privileges of being made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven; but who has never of his own will, and by his own faith, actually taken possession of them and used them. They are his indeed by right, yet being only possessed but not occupied by him are useless to him, nay are a disgrace and condemnation to him. They tell out indeed God's love to him, but they tell also his unthankfulness to God. They do not shelter, but leave him shelterless.

He has a name that he lives, but is dead (Rev. iii. 1).

But it is very different with those who actually take God's gifts of grace, who not only have been embraced by God in Christ, but have accepted His offer and have embraced and are embracing Him. They are in all reality alike of title and possession, "Members of Christ, the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven." They are put forth as such into the world's conflicts by the Lord Jesus Christ their Saviour, but when He putteth them forth He goeth before them Himself.

(2). Let us dwell upon these privileges themselves, thus endowed with which you are now being called by your Lord to come forth into life's conflicts, with sin, the world, and the devil.

You are "*a member of Christ.*" Consider what that means. It expresses the condition of one who is spiritually as much a part of Christ's body, as physically your hand or your foot is part of your body. You know the intimate connection which your hand, for instance, has with your body. Its life depends upon its connection with the living body; separated from it, it is a dead thing. It is protected by it; all the body is engaged for the protection

of every limb; all its wisdom and power is exercised to save even your little finger from harm. You spare no pains to protect it from injury, and to heal it if injured. Would you lose it? Would you let it be cut off? Never, if you could help it; never so long as it were possible to save it. All means and efforts would be exhausted first.

See in all this a picture of your privileges as a "member of Christ." You live on Him; without Him you can do nothing; you are kept safe by Him; all His power and His love are engaged for your salvation. However feeble and insignificant you may be in yourself, He will spare no pains to save you to the uttermost. Give you up! How can He give you up while your salvation is possible? Does He not love you with a love so lasting that it is an everlasting love? Does He not love you with a love so deep that when you were a sinner He died for you? You are His own, and where He puts you forth He goes before you. Who then can harm you?

Are you, trusting in this your Saviour, and yet afraid to confess Him, afraid to meet the world as His disciple? Think, then, of being "a member of Christ."

Consider how you love, cherish, protect, your own members however feeble. And see the cheering picture of the way in which the Lord Jesus Christ loves, cherishes, protects you.

Only remember, that whilst you thus protect your members, you expect them to obey you. Your will is law immediately to them. You wish the hand to open, the foot to walk; the one opens, the other walks at once if sound in health.

And what you expect from your members Christ expects from His. And they give it Him as readily, if they too are spiritually sound and in health. He wishes, and it is done.

But further. If you are a member of Christ, then as in Christ, as spiritually part of His body, you are also "the child of God." And God is now calling you forth out of the crowd to confess Him, and to be confessed by Him as His own, as a member of His body, nay as His child. And how truly and how beautifully does this image assure us of the truth of our Saviour's words, "When He putteth forth His own He goeth before them." Did you ever see a loving father thrusting his little son into a trying and difficult place without taking him by the hand and leading

him? Never! he feels for his child's every fear; he is anxious about his child's every danger; the danger is his as well as his child's; sympathy makes the two one.

And thus it is that the Lord God Almighty, infinite in power, and infinite in love, is calling you to come forward and confess Him, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent; He is speaking loudly to your conscience as one who would thrust you out of an indolent Christianity, into bold and active service for Him. Are you afraid thus to come forward? Do you shrink from the sneers of your fellows? Do you fear lest the demands should be too much for you? and are you saying, "Not yet, not yet; perhaps another year?" Look up, then, and see whose hand it is that is stretched out to take yours if you will venture it. It is the Hand of God Himself, of God Himself your Father.

And yet further. "If children, then heirs." If you are members of Christ, if you are therefore also children of God, then are you also "inheritors of the kingdom of heaven."

And it is as heirs of heaven too that the Lord is calling you to come out from the world for Him. You, then, who still being young have not hardened your hearts

against God; who have not yet forgotten the impressions of your mother's early teaching; who, though possibly inclining towards the world, do yet keep some hold of your Saviour's words, remember who and what you are. You are heirs of a kingdom, and that kingdom the kingdom of heaven. Will you be content to live as if this world were all? as if its prizes were the highest, and its joys the sweetest you could possibly attain to? Will you be content to forget eternity, to forego everlasting life, to deem a place beside the throne of Christ an object not worthy of your ambition? That is what you do if you neglect the call of God to a higher and more earnest life, year after year, and live calling yourselves Christians, but taking no step forward to prove yourselves such.

Again, let me remind you that when the Lord putteth forth His own sheep He goeth before them. He has gone the way of an heir of God to the throne, and that way the way of conflict, of work, of self-denial, of battling for His Father's honour, and suffering for His brethren's salvation. "No cross, no crown," says the Christian proverb. "If we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him," writes the apostle of the Lord. The easy self-complacent life,

half of pleasure, half of business, with little or no room for religion, is not the way to heaven, and will not take you there. The Lord is come to thrust you forth out of this into the path of life. He has led by His life, He is leading now by His Spirit. Will you try to follow Him?

I have endeavoured thus to set before you the Christian's *privileges:* the first thought suggested by the angels when Christ was born, "good tidings of great joy" (St. Luke ii. 10); the first uttered by our Lord in His first great Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed" (St. Matt. v. 2—12); the first teaching of the Church to her children when she names them as "members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of heaven."

These privileges are God's free gifts, given to us at the beginning—not our wages, earned at the end—of our Christian life.

We are bidden to believe in, and start as possessed of, them, while we look unto Christ, our Leader and our Lord, going on before us in the way. It is an attractive thought this that we should ever keep in mind. And we have a special help towards its remembrance in our Christian name. That name was given us at our Baptism, wherein we were made Christians; and

whenever we are called by it, we are called as Christians with Christian privileges to Christian life. Happy they who hearing it hear God's call as well as man's. Man's call indeed it may be to some earthly occupation—God's call also it is to do it, whatever it may be, for Him, and in His Name, as "members of Christ, the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven."

Confirmation Addresses.

BY THE

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III.

RENUNCIATION.

Gen. xii. 1.

"Now the Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee."

IT has been truly said that into whatever profession a man enters he must give up something. If he becomes a soldier, he must give up home and personal choice and liberty, and come and go as he is commanded. If he would be a man of learning, he must give up sleep and rise early and late take rest, that he may devote his time to reading. And if he becomes a Christian, he must also give up something, you may be sure, as a Soldier and a Disciple of Jesus Christ.

The approaching Confirmation is calling many to give themselves up to God. We

have every claim upon us to yield to such a call, and every encouragement. The Lord Himself has sealed us as His own in our Baptism; and He has promised to go before us in every difficulty to which He thrusts us forth.

The words which I have placed at the head of this address are God's call to Abram, expressing what he must give up to become the "Father of the faithful," and the "Friend of God."

"Get thee out of thy country," God said to him, "and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, into a land that I will show thee."

His home and his country were amongst those who knew not God, but they were his home, his country, and his life, all with which he was familiar and all which he loved; yet he was bidden to give them all up and venture himself upon God. And he did so.

My subject in this address is concerning those things which you are called upon as Christians to give up at God's call to you; namely, what was promised for you at your Baptism that you would give up, and what you yourselves at your Confirmation will shortly promise for yourselves to give up for ever. And although they are not house

and home and friends, yet very often they are so mixed up with what we love and what we possess, that it is as hard to give them up as country and kindred and home themselves.

What is it, then, that we are called upon to *renounce?* The answer in the Catechism is as follows: "The devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh."

To renounce these is to say "No" to them, when they tempt us as they did even our Saviour, "not to follow or be led by them," as our Baptismal Service expresses it, but "to fight manfully against them," and so "to continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto our lives' end."

Now when these enemies of ours are thus expressed, and stand before us in their rough naked aspect, we are shocked at the idea of being so debased and fallen from our high estate as God's children as to be ever overcome by them. But they present themselves in so many and in such insinuating forms, that having, by our fall, a bias away from God, we all yield in a measure to some of their attacks, and unless we realise our danger and resist them manfully with all the help we can obtain we shall certainly be overcome by

them. But we need not be overcome. It is in the power of our will with the help of God's Holy Spirit to overcome them all. He has called us, as He called Abram, to come away from them to the land which He will show us. He has bidden us in the words of His Apostle, "*Let* not sin reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." And promised us likewise, "For *sin shall not have dominion over* you; for ye are not under the law but under grace" (Rom. vi. 12, 13, 14).

I. What then are the works of the devil which we are commanded to renounce?

They are all shown, at least in outline, in the first appearance of the devil in Holy Scripture, at the Temptation in the Garden.

1. The *first* is, "*distrust of God.*" God had shown His love to Adam and Eve in creating them, and giving them one another for their happiness and all else that they could desire in the enjoyment of Himself and His creatures. And then

Satan comes and tries to give them hard thoughts of God; to persuade them that He is neither loving nor true, but unloving in keeping from them some of the fruit in the garden, and untrue in threatening what He did not mean to perform. The serpent said unto the woman, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Gen. iii. 1). And again, "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. iii. 4).

There is nothing in which the same tempter is more successful now. God is Love. God is Truth. But how often is each of these suggestions against His Love alike and His Truth made, and, alas! how often is it listened to! The Bible, from one end to the other, presses upon us to rest in God's Love, to be sure of it, and, come what may, to trust it. But men, nevertheless, are continually suspicious of Him, have hard rather than loving thoughts of Him, and shrink from venturing their souls upon Him even though Christ has died for them.

On the other hand the Bible undoubtedly contains denunciations of impenitent sinners, that they "shall surely die," and that their deaths shall involve them in terrible punishment for their sins; and yet, whenever they wish to sin, they listen to the

voice, "Ye shall not surely die." "These threatenings are not true. God does not mean them. You may risk the chance." And so they sin.

2. Another class of the devil's special works is lying, in all its kinds and varieties. It was a lie, and he knew it when he said, "Thou shalt not surely die," and it was a malicious lie, for its object was to ruin the happiness and destroy the life of man. Hence our Lord says of him, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (St. John viii. 44).

All that is false in word or deed, being hateful to God, who is absolute truth, is hateful to Him, and must be renounced if we would dwell with Him. But the tempter succeeds in this art of temptation now, too, as ever. He persuades either that there is no harm, or too little harm to be thought of, in lying; that it must be done, that you can't prosper, you can't get on either in society or in business without a certain amount of it; that all do it, and that what all do must have some reason for it. And so men glide into it, get used to it, get hardened to it, live in it, and die in it,

as if it were a mere nothing, and as if God had not said, "All liars shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (Rev. xxi. 8).

3. Closely connected with this, and often, as in the passage before us from Genesis, expressed by Satan and his followers in lying, come other works of his; *malice*, for instance, *hatred*, *unkindness*, all that is unlike that *Charity*, which "suffereth long, and is kind; envieth not; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; beareth all things" (1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5, 7).

You must give up all unkindness, and practice all love, even towards those you do not like, even towards those who dislike and are unkind to you, if you would renounce the works of the devil.

4. There is also among the devil's works, manifest in his daring accusations, in this passage, of God, and in his still more audacious attempt to persuade our Lord Himself to sin (St. Matt. iv. 1—12), that which St. Paul calls peculiarly the property of the devil—"Pride" (1 Tim. iii. 6). Self-importance, self satisfaction, *self* in fact in all forms, a high estimate of one's own rights, and an independence of God; *pride*, which the wise man truly says, "was not made for man," though man often rather

applauds it as high spirit than condemns it as unbecoming spirit, and the very opposite of that meekness which our Saviour pronounces *blessed.*

5. And there is also the peculiar work above all others of the tempter, that I mean of trying, as in the case of Adam and Eve, to make others sin, the leading them into temptation, the inducing them either for your own selfish pleasure, or for companionship sake, or for the very love of evil, to sin with you—a horrible sin, of which our Lord has spoken in these very solemn words, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Me (that is, cause them to stumble and sin), it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea" (St. Matt. xviii. 6).

Now, "to renounce these works of the devil," means to believe that he is a reality and that these are his works, and then once for all in principle, and day by day in actual practice as each temptation arises, resolutely to say "No" to it. "No. I am a member of Christ, the child of God, I will not, I dare not, I cannot do this." And for this it is needful and it is enough the moment you feel the temptation arising to pray for God's Holy Spirit to help you

to resist it; for of that help, and of its efficacy we have the sufficient promise in the words, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you; draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you" (St. James iv. 7).

II. The second great foe or class of foes whom we are to renounce is called "the pomps and vanity of this wicked world." "Love not the world" (wrote St. John, 1 Epist. ii. 15), "neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." All must know that there are many things in the world which have a tendency either to arrest the affections and turn them away, or to engross them and keep them away, from Christ. It may be a mere toy, it may be any other pleasure, it may be business, it may be science or art, it may be dress and appearance, it may be and very constantly is what is called "public opinion," with its censure we so dread, and its applause we so desire; but whatever it is in things seen which prevents our giving our affections to things not seen; whatever it is in persons or things about us, in our friends or foes, in our amusements, occupations, what we desire, and what we dread, here, which attracts our thoughts more than the

Lord Jesus Christ, His Love, His service, and His reward, *that* is to us among "the pomps and vanity of this wicked world," the mere outward appearance and empty name and semblance of good, which we must renounce lest it occupy our hearts and keep out the real and the good.

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (St. Matt. vi. 24).

We must examine ourselves and find out in each case what our temptation of this kind is. That there is such a reality, and that it is a temptation to each one of us we may be very sure.

III. Our third enemy to be renounced is what the Catechism calls "the sinful lusts of the flesh."

A "lust" is a desire. And the desires of the flesh are not altogether sinful. We are only called upon to renounce them when they are sinful, and so far as they are sinful. They are sinful when they are in excess, when they are out of place, when they become masters rather than servants. Thus, for instance, hunger and thirst are lusts of the flesh, but it is no

sin to eat and to drink. It only becomes sin when the one or the other is done in excess. And so with other lusts. They have their purpose. God has implanted them in us. But they are to be kept under control, otherwise they soon make slaves of us. Hence St. Paul writes of himself, "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. ix. 27). Look at a terrible contrast to this in the drunkard. The thirst for drink drives him as a very slave whither it wills. He feels as if he could not resist it. He vows, resolves, promises, and breaks all at its bidding. There are other sinful lusts of the flesh. Listen to Jesus Christ and to St. Paul, and pray for a pure heart to keep their words, "Ye have heard," said our Saviour, "that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart (St. Matt. v. 27, 28).

"The works of the flesh," writes St. Paul, "are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emu-

lations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. v. 19, 20, 21).

The best way to escape these temptations when they beset you, is to flee from them. Be as shocked as Joseph was when tempted. "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (Gen. xxxix. 9), and act as he did; flee from the very presence of such sins into the presence of God, and let the thought of them be driven away by thoughts of Him.

You are called to do so because you are called to be Christ's own, members of Christ, the children of God, and heirs of heaven.

Shall a member of Christ take this body of his which is one with Christ and make it one with an harlot?

Shall a child of God, made to be like God, and to enjoy God, be satisfied with the vain and fleeting things of this world, and sacrifice heaven for earth, eternity for a day?

Shall an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, the king's son, the king's heir,

forfeit his inheritance, and lose his throne at the suggestion of the tempter, the lying suggestion that his Father is not to be trusted for the future, and that he had better make the most he can of pleasure for the present? God forbid.

But times occur when a man cannot so easily flee from temptation, tied as he is still and bound by the chain of his former habits. What then shall he do? Dare to defy it.

There is a grand story in ancient Roman history, perhaps the grandest story upon record, which may lend us an illustration and urge us on to confidence in contest with our enemy.

"Marius, the man who rose from the ranks to be seven times Consul at Rome, was in a dungeon, and a slave was sent in to put him to death. Here stood then face to face the two extremities of forlorn humanity, its vanward and its rereward man, a Roman Consul and an abject slave. But the Consul now was in chains, and the slave for the moment seemed the arbiter of his fate. By what marvel then did Marius reinstate himself in his natural prerogative, and in the twinkling of an eye wrench from the assassin the power which circumstances had placed within his grasp?

Standing like a rock before him he smote him with his eye and said, 'Dost thou, man, *dare* to kill Caius Marius?' and the wretch, quaking under the voice, sank gently to the ground, turned round upon his hands and feet, and crawling out of the prison left Marius standing as stedfast and immovable as the Capitol of Rome itself."

Sin comes in like that crouching slave at Satan's bidding, because in your old nature you are bound with the chains of evil tendencies. How shall you drive it from your presence? Not, indeed, as Marius, merely by the supremacy of your own natural mind, but by the mighty supremacy of Christ's indwelling Spirit. Stand as a rock on Christ the Rock. Look the sin in its cringing face and say, "Dost *thou dare* to kill a *member of Christ*, the *Child of God*, and an *inheritor* of the kingdom of Heaven?" *Thus* "resist the devil, and he will flee from you;" thus, "*let* not sin reign in your mortal body . . . and it shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law but under grace."

I began this subject with an allusion to the call of Abraham to renounce his country and his friends. Let me return to it for a close. In calling Abram away from his

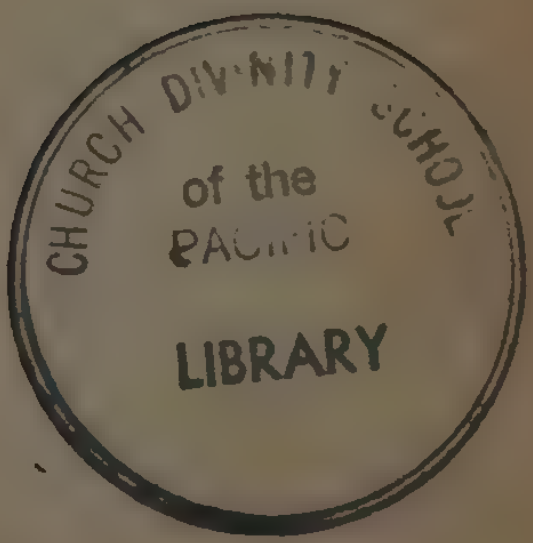
home, God called him to a land he knew not, but which God promised to show him. He calls you similarly to a land you know not, but which He will show you. The joy of being Christ's indeed, and knowing it; the joy of being loved by, and of loving, Him; the joy of seeking to honour Him on earth, with the hope of being honoured by Him in Heaven; the joy of being able to say with St. Paul, "To *me* to live is Christ, and to *die* is gain" (Phil. i. 21), all this is a land which possibly you do not know yet, but God will show it you.

With such a prospect and such a title as you have to it you may well be persuaded, like Abram, at once to arise and seek it, leaving all other attractions behind you. And the example of God's call to Abram puts the need of this immediate action before you all in a striking manner; and speaks not only to those who may have fallen into such sins as I have been speaking of and the Catechism sets before us, but all who are living in danger of them, at least in their more subtle, if not in their grosser forms. And who then is not in danger? God's call to us is not only to give up actual sin, but all that may lead to it, and henceforth to walk with God as the friends of God. Happy they that do so;

for escaping the sins they will escape the worst of the sorrows of the world; and giving up the love of the things of time, they will have all their hearts open for the love of the things of eternity.

IV.

FAITH.



FAITH.

St. John xiv. 1.

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me."

OUR religion requires of us that we live above the world, in it, but not of it. But we can only rise thus above ourselves and our natural sphere by the help of some one who is above us and our sphere. This our God offers to do for us: and the faculty by which we suffer Him to do so, and with which we clasp His proffered hand, is "our Faith"; our power of seeing the unseen, of accepting, and relying upon Him.

When therefore we are taught that, as the "children of God," we must give up "the world," and have our "conversation in heaven," and we ask, "How is this

possible?" the reply is in our Saviour's words, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (St. Mark ix. 23). Accordingly, in our Church's instruction to her children after she has taught them what they must renounce, viz., "the devil, the world, and the flesh," she goes on to teach them what they must believe, in the Creed, the chief instruction of which she sums up in the following words:—

"First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who hath made me and all the world;

Secondly, in God the Son, who hath redeemed me and all mankind;

Thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God."

In this address I attempt to illustrate—(I.) What Christian faith is. (II.) What Christian faith does.

I. Firstly, then, what is Christian faith?

1. The religious faculty which we call faith is in its simplest form "taking God at His word"; believing, as on rational grounds we are bound to believe, that the Bible contains the "Word of God," and accepting it, with all its wonderful

revelations to us, as true and containing all things needful for our salvation.

We have a simple and beautiful illustration of such faith in the case of the nobleman recorded by St. John, who entreated the Lord to come down at once to his house ere his child died. "Go thy way," was our Lord's reply, "thy son liveth." "And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way" (St. John iv. 50). He took the Lord at His word, though that word announced a miracle of mercy. Like Abraham, "he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (Rom. iv. 20, 21).

This is the intellectual side of faith.

2. It has also a moral side. Indeed, it is a moral, or rather a spiritual, habit, the soul's rest in the Almightiness and love of God.

"Abraham," we read, who was the father of the faithful, "believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness" (Genesis xv. 6).

"He believed in God." It is said that no English word can fully express all that is attempted to be expressed in "believed"

here. "He supported himself; he built himself up; he reposed in the strength of God as a child in its mother's arms" (such seems the force of the root of the Hebrew word). Yes, in the strength of God, whom he did not see, more than in the bright lights of heaven, or the claims of tribe and kindred which were always before him.

Taking God at His word; and resting on Him as a child in its mother's arms—these two thoughts give us the idea of religious faith.

But we are seeking for Christian faith, which is a step higher.

You will have noticed that the faith I am speaking of as religious faith is faith in a Person; not merely faith in a statement, or theory, or conclusion, but faith in a Person, and that Person *God*. Now the strength of faith in a person will vary very much according to our knowledge of that person. A son would have faith in his father, though he had lived away from him in India all his life, and he had never seen him since his childhood, simply because he was his father; but he would have much clearer and stronger faith in him if he had been with him, and if he had all along received from him the kindness of a father. Our Saviour, therefore, to sustain His disciples by inten-

sifying their faith in God, said to them when about to leave them, "Ye believe in God, believe also in *Me*." For He was God manifested to them, dwelling with them, so that, as He shortly afterwards expressed it. "He that hath seen *Me* hath seen the Father" (St. John xiv. 9). And as He here identifies the Godhead of the Father with His own, so a few verses later He identifies His own Godhead with that of the Holy Spirit; for He speaks of the coming of the Spirit as the coming of another Self, as the coming of His own Self. "If ye love me, keep the commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter . . . even the Spirit of truth. I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you" (15, 16, 17, 18).

Hence the *Persons* our faith is trained to rest upon are: God the Father, who made us; God the Son, who redeemed us; God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifies us. And this is revealed to us to *assist* our faith. For our relation to God, or, at all events, our acting in accordance with our relation to God, depends upon our knowing what He *is to us;* not what He is in Himself, but what He is to us. What He is in Himself we do not, perhaps cannot, know. What He is to us is what we need to know, and

what all men can and may know. It is not necessary for men to know what the sun in the heavens is ; but it is necessary for them to know what the sunshine is, that is, what the sun is *to them ;* what its rays will do, and what its light effect. And thus it is not needful for us to know and understand the essence of the Godhead, the mysterious Trinity in unity—what He is in Himself. But what is needful for us to know is what He is to us: and He is revealed to us

As the Father, who made us and all the world. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

"So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them" (Genesis i. 1, 27).

As the Son, who redeemed us and all mankind, thus setting us free from penalty and bondage. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. iii. 13).

As the Holy Ghost, who sanctifies us, thus helping us to be holy and good. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. v. 22, 23).

God manifested in Jesus Christ is not as

a Father who has lived away from us, unseen and unknown all our life, but as one with whom we have lived and been familiar from our childhood to the present day.

And God revealed to us as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, He is to us all we need. In the Father as our Creator, He meets man's first great inquiry, "Who am I, and whence do I come?"

In Jesus Christ as our Redeemer He meets man's first great want, of pardon as sinful man.

And in the Holy Spirit as our Sanctifier He meets man's constant great need, of strength and holiness as weak and erring man.

We may well have faith in such a God. Faith in God thus revealed is Christian faith.

II. And now I come to the question as to "What Christian faith does."

1. It sets us right with God. It puts us back into the right relation to Him. By sin we had got wrong. He was made angry with us, and we became suspicious of Him. The only possible thing that man can do to have this put right is to take God at His word, and rest in Him. He has promised for Christ's sake to accept us again on these

conditions, and to treat us as again "all right with Him." "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through *Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Rom. v. 1).

"Behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment."

What brought her there?

Hear our Lord's own answer: "He said to the woman, Thy *faith* hath saved thee; go in peace" (St. Luke vii. 37, 38, 50).

2. Faith keeps us right with God.

By it we work acceptably to God. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. xi. 6).

And thus, for example, "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the Son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach

of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible" (Heb. xi. 24—28).

By it we are kept unto the end and actually and completely saved. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God *through faith* unto salvation" (1 Pet. i. 3, 4, 5).

It is no wonder that much is made of our faith when it works all this; no wonder that our Church makes much of the Creed when salvation is thus revealed as hanging upon our faith.

And now with this explanation of faith and its influence in Christian life, I should like to call your attention to the way in which it is commended to us by our services in church.

1. You never go to church without saying the Creed. Why is this? Is it a prayer?

No Is it a passage of Holy Scripture? No. Is it a hymn of praise? No, nor yet that exactly. Why, then, do we say it in all our services?

Consider what the Christian Church is. It is a society. And every society has its symbol—its code of rules. And the code of rules of the Christian Society is not "What we are bound to do?" but the groundwork of that—"What we are bound to believe." Upon the walls where any other society meets or in the books of its associations, you find written its Rules. In the hearts and on the lips of the Society of Christians you have its Faith. For Christendom is not held together by a code of laws, nor by a ritual, but by its faith. Christianity is "The faith." And therefore it is that standing up as if to declare what we stand and walk by, we sing, or say—

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord . . .

. . . I believe in the Holy Ghost . . ."

It is the public profession of the foundation of our religion.

2. There is a peculiarity in the expressions of the Creed. In rehearsing it we speak in language different to that of all the rest of the service. When we pray, we say,

"*Our* Father." When we praise, we say, "*We* praise Thee, O God." When we recite the Creed, we say, "*I* believe."

Faith, which is the most intimate connection of the soul with God, is a personal work. No one can believe for another. In the Creed you speak for yourself and yourself alone, to God, before all the world,

"I BELIEVE."

And indeed it is a very solemn thing thus to say the Creed. At best we can hardly close such a profession so publicly made without adding in our hearts the words of the distressed father in the Gospel, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief" (St. Mark ix. 24).

I spoke at the beginning of this address of having to live above this world though walking in it; of the need of having some hand from heaven to lift us up above ourselves; and of this our faith being that faculty by which we surrender ourselves to be taken hold of by God, and by which we ourselves take hold of Him. A common scene on earth may picture it out to us. A loving father is leading his little son along a rough and dirty way. He holds his willing hand fast in his loving grasp. He lifts him over the rough, carries him through the wet,

places. The way is wearisome and long, but the child is with his father, and he cares little for all else. His father's presence, his father's voice, his father's love lift him above all. He looks to his father, not to the way, and is gladdened with his smile, not wearied with its toil. He is above it, for he is with his father, and they are going home. Look up and see the everlasting arm of your loving Father stretched out in Christ and His Spirit to pardon, strengthen, lead, and carry you. Lean your weight on it, for it is "underneath you," and let it lift you up above the common ways of life, in nearness to the very heart of God. When difficulties arise and perplexities come, and the way seems dark and long, say, "I believe in God the Father, my Father. He made me. He will keep me. He will do what is best for me. I will leave myself in His hands."

When sin accuses, and conscience backs the accusation, and you know not what to do, say, "I believe in God the Son, my Redeemer. He died for me. He lives for me. He is able to save me to the uttermost, and He will save me."

When you are wearied, and depressed, and weak, and unfit for work, hardly able to say "I believe" at all; think then of

the blessed Comforter, the Holy Ghost the Comforter, and try to say, pray for grace to say, "I believe in God the Holy Ghost my Comforter. He has strengthened, He will strengthen me. I look to Him. I will trust yet and not be afraid."

You *may* trust. And that trust will sustain and lift you up, and make you brave and strong to work. For it will make God's strength yours, and in His strength you will be strong indeed. You may say as one has beautifully said—

"I know not the way I am going,
But well do I know my Guide,
With a childlike trust I give my hand
To the mighty Friend by my side.

"The only thing that I say to Him,
As He takes it is, 'Hold me fast,
Suffer me not to lose my way,
And bring me home at last.'

"As when some helpless wanderer,
Alone in an unknown land,
Tells the guide his destined place of rest,
And leaves all else in his hand;

"'Tis home, 'tis home we wish to reach,
He who guides may choose the way.
Little we heed the path we take,
If nearer home each day."

V.

OBEDIENCE.

OBEDIENCE.

St. Matthew xxii. 37—40.

"Jesus said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

FOLLOWING the instruction of our Church to the young in the Catechism in order to prepare them for Confirmation, I have endeavoured to illustrate and enforce her words as they explain—

1. What they are,—"Members of Christ, the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven."

2. What they must as such give up,—"The devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh."

3. What they must believe in,—"God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost."

And now we come to what they must *do*,—"Keep God's holy will and Commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their life."

These commandments, expressing our duty towards God and towards man, are the subject of this address.

Our Lord sums them all up in the words, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." And, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And the Catechism explains them in words of matchless force and simplicity in "The Duty towards God" and "The Duty towards our neighbour."

But before I enter upon the commandments themselves I must dwell for a few minutes upon the preface to them. It brings before us again what we are so apt to forget, though we so much need to remember it—the right motive for Christian life. It is stated in the words with which the Lord commenced the giving of the Law—

"I am the Lord, thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" And then im-

mediately follows, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me" (Exodus xx. 2, 3).

Observe, then, the reason and the motive given by God to the Israelites for keeping His Law.

It was because He was "the Lord," the one ever-existing Jehovah; it was because He was "their God," their own God, all that is conceivable of good to them; it was because He had proved this by a special act of most wonderful deliverance, "which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." It was because of all this, that out of thankfulness for all they owed Him, they should endeavour to please Him by keeping His commandments.

And observe the motive by which God would induce *us* also to serve Him, is the same exactly in principle, though it is in itself much stronger. It is the substance of which that was the shadow. It is indeed now as then, because He is "the Lord," and has an absolute right to our service; it is because He is our God, a God of infinite goodness revealed to us in Jesus Christ; and it is because He has, by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, redeemed us from the bondage of sin and death, that we are called upon to obey and serve Him.

"Ye are not your own," writes St. Paul, "for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20).

The same motive which at the beginning of the Catechism is pressed upon us to induce us to *renounce* sin, viz., that we are "members of Christ, the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven," is here repeated to induce us to *do* good, viz., because Christ has purchased us for Himself by His own blood to do Him service.

Consider then what service we are to render to God, and what to our neighbour, that is our fellow man, whenever we are thrown in the way with him, because we are God's children, Christ's members, redeemed by His blood, and assisted by His Spirit for His service. You know the commandments. There is abundance, of course, in each one of them for separate treatment, but there may be also an advantage in treating them altogether.

They have a simple division into the first and second tables, what our Saviour calls the first and the second commandment; the first four commandments relating to our duty to God, the last six relating to our duty to man.

Firstly then as regards those which tell us the particulars of our duty towards God.

1. The first commandment relates to our choosing and serving, and so "having" as God, only the true God, who is revealed to us as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. *He* is really our God, *That* is really our God, which of all persons or things we love most; and therefore above all other persons or things, above friends, money, pleasure, even life itself, we are to love Him,

"With all our heart, and all our mind, and all our soul, and all our strength." Thus—

"Thou shalt have none other gods but Me."

"Me" indeed thou shalt have, but none other.

2. The second commandment relates not so much to the worship of the *true* God, already commanded in the first, as to the *way* in which He is to be worshipped. If the first commands you to worship only the true God, the second commands you to worship Him in the only true way, that is not by means of any image or likeness of Him, but as "He is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth." St. John iv. 24.

"Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything

that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath. . . . Thou shalt not bow down to them nor worship them . . . . ." No! but on the contrary. Thou shalt worship Him, as revealed in Jesus Christ, and give Him thanks, and put your whole trust in Him, and call upon Him. What is condemned in this commandment is the worship of the true God in a wrong way; what is therefore commanded is the worship of Him in the right way, with spiritual worship through one only Mediator and Advocate, Jesus Christ our Lord.

3. The third commandment touches that by which God is known and revealed to us, *His name*. It condemns all profaneness in common conversation, especially in the thoughtless use of any of His names; and also all carelessness in worship when God's Name is in people's mouths, but not in their hearts. It also condemns all irreverent treatment of God's Holy Word, which is in a true sense His Name as being that which tells us who He is, and what He is to us.

Thus in its true spirit it commands that alike in conversation and in worship we treat His great and holy Name with reverence, and study His Holy Word with prayer.

"Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain," is the letter of what this Law forbids. "Thou shalt honour His holy Name and His Word" is the spirit of what it commands.

Perhaps you have been struck with the words with which this commandment, and this only, concludes,

"For the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His Name in vain."

God foresaw what has but too surely come to pass, that men would think the violation of this commandment a trifle. They use God's Name merely to adorn their oaths, or to add emphasis to their assertions, in the mere wantonness of profane irreverence; and if spoken to on the subject ask in astonishment, "What harm have I done in that?" What harm? why you are habituating yourself to a practice which is destructive of all reverence. You are harming all around you by your example, and doing yourself such harm, that whatever you may think, God has expressly and solemnly warned you that He "will not hold such guiltless."

4. The fourth commandment, which bids us work on six days and rest on one in the week, has thus these words only left for its explanation in "the duty towards God" of

the Catechism, but you will admit that they are very expressive words, "and to serve Him truly all the days of my life"; that is "to serve Him by true and honest work for six days, as well as by true and religious rest for one day in each week.

"This," our Saviour says, all this relating to our duty towards God, "is the first and great commandment."

He adds, "And the second is like unto it," that is in its principle, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This brings us to the second table. And as each commandment of the first table requires for its fulfilment that "we love God with all our heart and soul, and mind and strength," so each commandment of the second table requires that "we love our neighbour as ourself." Our Lord has given us a practical explanation of this in His words, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." St. Matt. vii. 12. And in "the duty towards our neighbour" this is adopted and added as an explanation of the command, "My duty towards my neighbour is to love him as myself, and to do to all men, as I would they should do unto Me."

II. Now just apply this principle of doing

to another as, if circumstances were changed, you would desire him to do to you, and see how it explains and enforces each of the six last commandments.

5. The fifth commandment is concerning the duty of parents, and all who stand in the relation of parents, such as rulers, teachers, pastors, to children, and such as stand in the relation of children, to them. Are you then children? Behave to your parents as you would wish them, if your children, to behave to you. Should you ever become parents, act to your children as you would wish them, if your parents, to act to you.

6. The sixth commandment forbids murder. It is explained as commanding "to hurt nobody by deed," "to bear no malice nor hatred in your heart." You do not like any one to bear malice towards, or to hurt you. You are vexed at the thought of any one's feeling unkindly towards you. Take care then that you do not vex another by hurting, or even by feeling unkindly towards, him. Love even your enemies.

7. The seventh forbids adultery, or as our Lord explains it, the mere look with the thought of any such sin. (St. Matt. v. 28.) Take care you never cast such a look upon another. Keep your body, if you would

keep this commandment, and keep yourself, heart as well as body, "in temperance, soberness, and chastity." Be "pure in heart." Abstain from impure books and thoughts and words.

8. The eighth is "Thou shalt not steal." Now you sorely complain if any one is dishonest in any way to you. Be then as honest to all others, in all transactions, as you would have them honest to you.

"True and honest in all your dealings," this will be the principle of your life: "keeping your hands from picking and stealing," this will be its action in all particulars.

9. The ninth, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour," enjoins truthfulness. "To keep your tongue from evil speaking, and slandering"; "to hurt nobody by word," but to be charitable in all you say as well as in all you do.

Consider but one moment how you wish people to speak of you. Speak of them in the same spirit; and you will never, as long as you live, say another unkind or untrue word.

10. The tenth and last commandment enjoins "contented industry," "not to covet nor desire other men's goods," not to desire gain by their loss as in betting and

gambling, but to learn and labour truly to get your own living.

Even in this commandment which expressly concerns the inner and unseen man, the thoughts and desires of the heart, the same principle holds good. You would not like, if you knew it, and it is wonderful how even men's thoughts do let themselves be known, that others should be coveting and desiring to possess themselves of your property. Take care then to treat them, even in your desires, as you wish to be treated by them. Do not covet what is theirs. "Be content with such things as you have; for He hath said I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Heb. xiii. 5. And He is enough for man.

Thus true it is that the words of our Saviour, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," covers the whole of the second table of the commandments; and hence St. Paul writes, "Owe no man anything but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as

thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Rom. xiii. 8—11.

III. I have spoken of the motive we have to keep the commandments, namely, the fact that Christ has redeemed us; and of the commandments themselves. I should like to add something about the object of these commandments. Why has God given us commands? Why does He bid us keep them if we love Him, and if we believe that we are His? Is it His mere arbitrary will? Does He lay upon us these restrictions simply because He can command, and we must obey? God is Love, and whatever He does for us He does in love to us. When He gives laws He gives them in love. Their object is our happiness.

Which of these commandments could we spare? Could we do as well, or could we do at all, without honour to parents, or kindness to one another, or temperance, or chastity, or honesty, or faithfulness, or content? Remove any one of them and you break up the happiness of society. If all men obeyed these commandments how happy the world would be. If we obeyed them how happy we should be. The one thing which makes us truly miserable, the

one thing only which is intolerable in its burden, is "Sin, the transgression of the law."

IV. Mark then this step further in our Church's guidance on this subject.

The commandments are read every Sunday morning in church. One by one, in all their clear and piercing simplicity, are these *words* of God read out aloud to tell us what we shall *not* do: "Thou shalt not," "Thou shalt not," "Thou shalt not." And they are not the least solemn and impressive part of our very impressive service. They have before now, one or other of them, struck home to the sinner's conscience, and sent him away convinced that he was fighting against God.

But we are not left by our Church thus to dwell upon our transgressions and sins without guidance as to what we shall do with them, or without hope as to how we shall overcome them. As the sound of each command of God ceases to ring in our ears, we are instructed to respond, and commonly in penitential tones, with the language of confession and of prayer. Scarcely has the word of God's minister closed with "Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not commit adultery," "Thou shalt not steal,"

&c., &c., than God's people with one voice reply, "Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law." We pray for *mercy*, because in the past, as we acknowledge, we have broken the commandment; we pray for the inclination of our hearts by God that in the future we may break it no more.

And we know, for it is with that thought that the commandments were ushered in, we know that He will hear such prayer, because He is our God, because He has redeemed us, and we are His children. A penitent child never cries in vain to a loving father. And "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins." 1 John ii. 1, 2.

If our covenant with God in Christ were thus defined by Him, "Keep the commandments, and so become My children and live," we could have no hope; for we have not kept the commandments, and we can win no life by keeping them. But since God rather expressed it thus, "Ye are my children, live as my children and keep the commandments;" we thank God for the life He has given us in Christ; we praise Him for His adopting love, we try to please Him by keeping His commandments, and

when we fail, as fail we often do, we go and tell Him, and ask His forgiveness for the past, and His help for the future.

"Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law." "Lord have mercy upon us, and write all these Thy laws in our hearts, we beseech Thee."

VI.

PRAYER.

PRAYER.

St. Luke xi. 1.

"Lord, teach us to pray."

WHEN we dwell upon the Commandments of God as interpreted by our Saviour, and think of all they forbid and all they enjoin, we feel the truth of what the Church in her Catechism puts into her teacher's lips, namely, that we cannot keep these commandments without God's special grace.

Many persons, perhaps most, give up at once the attempt to keep them. They say it is impossible to keep them; that nobody ever does keep them, and that it is of no use trying to do so. And so while they retain the name, and flatter themselves that they retain the hope, of Christians, they abandon the reality.

But others, believing that they are indeed the children of God and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, with much thankfulness for all that Christ has done for them, and with some trust in all that He may yet do for them, determine honestly and heartily that they will walk in God's commandments and keep them as nearly as they can.

And the first outpouring of their hearts as they enter upon such a life is that of prayer. "Lord help me; Lord give me Thy grace to serve Thee."

Such a state of mind is, in our days, frequently met with a variety of objections. "What is the use of prayer?" it is said, "How can it affect God?" "Do you suppose He will alter the laws of the universe to help you?" "Why then should you waste your time in praying at all?"

I. Then, let us reply to this question, Why are we to pray?

1. Because it is part of our very nature to do so. Prayer to some one stronger than ourselves is one of our instincts. In sudden danger, when the real man speaks out, it is ever, "God help me." In deep distress, when the soul has no other comfort, it is constrained to ask for it of God.

This is seen outside the pale of Chris-

tianity as well as within it. Thus Chunder Sen, an Indian Deist, writing of his struggles, says, "Feeble in body, feeble in mind, feeble still in spirit, how could I stand in the face of enemies outside and enemies within contending for the mastery of my soul? In deep agony I consulted my soul, and my soul said in language exceedingly simple and impressive, 'Pray, and pray, if you want salvation; none but God can save sinners.'"

A Christian scholar, fully alive to all the difficulties of the question, the late Mr. Conington, thus expresses, in kindred language, the answer of *his* soul: "My own belief is, that in personal matters whatever is worth serious anxiety is worth making a subject of prayer; that praying is a better attitude towards the future than fretting."

2. We are to pray not only because our nature requires it, but because God commands it. I suppose I might say with truth that our nature requiring it is one way, and perhaps the strongest way, of God's commanding it. But there is another way in which He commands it, and that is in His Word. He has bidden us "*Pray without ceasing*" (1 Thess. v. 17).

Of course, if we do not believe in the Bible as the revelation of God's will, we

shall not be moved by any commands it may put forth. But if we do, such positive injunctions as this are enough to silence all objections to prayer. An unbeliever may say indeed, "I cannot see the use of prayer"; but your reply, satisfactory to you if not to him, is this: "It is God's command. I do not pretend to solve all mysteries, but I trust God rather than you. I choose to follow the teaching of the Bible rather than your objection. Even if the words were only St. Paul's, I think St. Paul a wiser and a better man than you, and I *shall pray*."

3. We are to pray because Jesus Christ, our example, prayed.

"It came to pass," writes St. Luke, "in those days that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God" (St. Luke vi. 12).

We believe Him to be the perfect man and the Very God; and He, in His manhood, to do His work as man and to set us a perfect example, spent more time in prayer than any other man we read of. Prayer was a reality to Him, and so were God's answers. "I know," He said, "that Thou hearest me always" (St. John xi. 42).

"More things are wrought by prayer

than this world dreams of." But not more than He dreamt of. He knew its power, its efficacy, and its comfort, and therefore He prayed, and so must you.

II. Then, "What is prayer?"

1. It is first of all simply telling God all that is in your heart, in the childlike confidence that He will hear, attend, and do what is best for you. Thus Martha and Mary sent and told Jesus of their brother's sickness in these words: "Lord, behold he whom Thou lovest is sick" (St. John xi. 3). This was surely praying Him to come and help. Just so St. Paul bids us "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. iv. 6).

And this exactly meets what we know by experience to be the cravings of our hearts. It bids us tell out all our care to God, and assures us of relief, if in no other way, at least in the sense of knowing that He will either remove the trouble, or strengthen us to bear it.

2. Then, again, prayer is asking for definite gifts of God to ourselves and others. There cannot be a better illustration of this than these requests of the Lord's Prayer:

"Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses," &c., &c.

These are the simple plain petitions which Christ Himself has taught us. If we may ask thus at all, we may ask thus for anything which concerns our good. And He has promised an answer. "Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." (St. Matt. vii. 7.)

And this is what may be done at any and at every hour of the day, whenever a temptation arises, or a danger meets us in our path. We can then and there call to mind the presence of God. We can reverently place ourselves before Him; and waiting there a few moments to remember who He is, and what we are, we can fervently pray Him to help us as He knows to be best for us. And such prayer will not be in vain. But what can and should thus be done on every occasion of need, should be more fully done with reference to all the needs of our life and circumstances at least every morning and evening as they come. Neither work nor weariness should ever be allowed to break through this habit; for if you once begin to put off your prayers, depend upon it you have taken the first step to put off your religion altogether.

3. Further, *thanksgiving* is an essential of prayer. In the passage just quoted from the Epistle to the Philippians, "with thanksgiving" is an emphatic addition, "in everything by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God." We cannot approach God at all without a deep sense of thankfulness for what he has done for us; "for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life, but, above all, for His inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Judge as far as the analogy will carry you from yourselves. What would you think of a beggar, or even of your own child, who came to you continually asking, but never thanking, in whose manner and expression there was a constant complaining of want, but little or no expression of gratitude? It would not be a pleasure to you to encourage such a spirit. And God would have us kept in all the brightness of thankful spirits. Thankfulness is a very joyous condition; and God wills to have His children live "in love, and joy, and peace."

4. Once more, an essential part of prayer is adoration, not asking for anything nor

thanking for anything, but "adoring, worshipping, praising God, for what He is in Himself." It is the natural outburst of the Christian's heart. We have beautiful illustrations of it in the hymns of our Communion Service, in which from age to age the Church has expressed its feelings—

"Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious name, evermore praising Thee, and saying, 'Holy holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory: glory be to Thee, O Lord most high.'"

"Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will towards men. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty."

III. And now we come to the *form* which our prayers should take; and we have it given us by our Lord Himself, who taught his disciples "after this manner" to "pray" when He gave them the Lord's Prayer; not, that is, necessarily or exclusively in these words, but after the form and in the order and spirit of them.

"Our Father, which art in heaven . . ."

In this, the Lord's Prayer, you should observe how every word lays down a principle of prayer. The first word, for instance, "Our," bids us pray not as individuals only, but as members of a society; not for ourselves only, but for others. The next word, "Father," "Our Father," assures of the loving character of Him whom we approach in Christ, and encourages us, as we enter upon our petitions, to believe they will be granted; for "if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto our children, how much more shall our Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (St. Matt. vii. 11.)

The words which complete this address, "which art in heaven," lift up our thoughts above this world, remind us that we are approaching the Lord of heaven as of earth, though that Lord in infinite compassion is our Father. "Our Father, which art in heaven." As "the desire" in the Catechism expresses it: "I desire *my* Lord God, *our* Heavenly Father"—(*mine* indeed, though *ours* also)—"who is the giver of all goodness, to send His grace unto *me* and to all people."

We pass on to the petitions, and are struck first with this, that all the earlier ones relate to the advancement of God's

glory. Before we may venture to ask for any of our temporal wants, we are to implore God to give us His grace, that we and all others "may worship Him, serve Him, and obey Him as we ought to do." "Hallowed" by me and by all others "be Thy name." "Thy kingdom come"—Thyself be King in my heart and the heart of all mankind. "Thy will," as angels do it in heaven, "be done" by me and by all on earth.

After thus praying for God's glory we are encouraged to go on and ask as simply for "all things that be needful both for our souls and bodies," daily food, daily forgiveness, daily deliverance from all evil. "After this manner" our Saviour would teach us to tell to our God in detail, one by one, all the special needs which each one has; for whatsoever is of sufficient importance to interest us is of sufficient importance to interest Him for us.

And then the whole concludes with the grand ascription of all power and glory to Him, so that, whereas we began with the recognition of the love of our Father, and of His willingness to hear, we conclude with the proclamation of the Majesty of our God, and of His power to help us.

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

IV. To this our Lord's form of prayer I would add next His remark on *praying in faith.*

"What things soever," he said, "ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them" (St. Mark xi. 24).

St. James gives similar directions. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering" (St. James i. 5, 6).

We have a very striking illustration of what this faith in prayer should be in the story of Jacob wrestling with the angel of God, with the Son of God Himself while anticipating for a season the human form which now he has put on, never to be laid aside again.

"And Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day."

"And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh." And he said, "I will not let thee go except Thou bless me" (Genesis xxxii. 24, 26).

With reverence we may say it, and God would have us say it, "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me."

It was exactly in this spirit of importunate faith that the woman of Canaan pleaded with our Lord, and would take no denial for mercy to her afflicted daughter. His silence did not silence her. His answer, worse than silence, did not make her hold her peace or cease to cry unto Him or cease to believe in Him. She went on unmoved by what seemed the most bitter rebuke. She acknowledged herself a very dog, and yet drew consolation and argument even from that. "It is not meet," He said, "to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs." "Truth, Lord," she replied, "and yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Then said He, "O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt" (St. Matt. xv. 21—29).

It is most likely that St. Paul had this same story of Jacob's wrestling in his mind when he described by this very word to the Colossians his own prayers and those of Epaphras (Coloss. i. 29, iv. 12).

You can tell whether the faith with which you pray is at all like this which is thus described; whether your prayers are in

any sense a wrestling with God, or whether they are rather mere utterances of words to which you never think of looking for an answer. "I am bound to acknowledge," wrote a noble Christian, the late Sir F. Buxton, "I am bound to acknowledge that I have always found that my prayers have been heard and answered. Not that I have in every instance—although in almost every instance I have—received what I asked for; nor do I expect or wish it. I always qualify my petitions by adding, provided that what I ask for is for my real good, and according to the will of my Lord. With this qualification I submit my wants and wishes in all things small and great to God. I understand literally the injunction, 'Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God'; and I cannot but notice how amply these prayers have been met."

This, remember, was one of a noble band of men who won over the House of Commons and the people of Great Britain to banish slavery from the empire, and to declare that henceforth no subject of the Queen should ever be anything but free. He did nothing and spoke nothing without casting himself on God in prayer.

I am speaking to many young men and young women, who are about to commence at their Confirmation the profession of a Christian life. I have tried to say many things to you, but above all let me say, "Pray." As you rise in the morning, as you go to bed at night, "Pray." As you go along the streets or roads to your work, and as you come home, "Pray." When you feel an evil thought rising in your heart, "Pray." When you are conscious of a wicked desire stealing over you, "Pray." Are you entering upon a business or a situation? "Pray." Are you making an intimate friend? "Pray." Are you thrown with those who are doing you harm? "Pray." In all things and at all times seek God's guidance. "Pray without ceasing."

It need not occupy much of your time, though you ought always to secure some time for it; a word or an exclamation, a sigh or a secret wish will often express it. For God is very near, and His ear is quick of hearing, and His hand close by to help. Nay, "before we call He answers, and while we yet speak He hears our prayer." At all events we know of one prayer that has been fully answered. "Lord, teach us to pray," was the disciples' prayer, the

prayer of the Church of God represented by them. He taught them, and has taught us by them. We know how to pray, and we know what priceless blessings are promised to our prayers. Which then shall be written in our history: He was a man of prayer? or, He was a prayerless man?

VII.

SACRAMENTS.

I.—"THE OUTWARD AND VISIBLE SIGN."

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IN these addresses preparatory to Confirmation, I have dwelt upon the leading points of our holy religion. Following the order of the Church Catechism, I have considered, "What a Christian is"; "What he must give up"; "What he must believe"; "What he must do"; "How he must pray." I pass on to those means of grace which combine all these subjects in their teaching, I mean the Sacraments.

God in His mercy teaches us not only through the ear, but through the eye, and

not merely by verbal promises, but by sealed covenants. These latter we call Sacraments; of which there are but two, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, which come under our Church's definition of a Sacrament.

This definition is as follows: By the word Sacrament we mean "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ Himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof."

I propose to consider this definition.

Observe then there are three things essential to a Sacrament as we understand that word.

1. There must be an outward sign.

2. There must be an inward grace, of which this outward sign is the sign, the means, and the pledge.

3. There must be the appointment of Christ Himself to make the outward sign the means and the pledge of our receiving the inward grace.

The two first, the outward and the inward, the outward and visible sign, and the inward and spiritual grace, are the two parts of the Sacrament itself.

The third, namely Christ's appointment, is that which unites them and makes them of efficacy.

First, then, with reference to these two parts, let us consider the outward as a sign of the inward.

It is so difficult for us to realise the spiritual, to be assured that we possess and have that which we cannot touch, or taste, or see, or realise, with any of our outward senses, that God helps us to such an assurance by outward symbols, stamped and authenticated by Himself.

Such an outward sign, if it were ordained to be a sign or symbol of an inward reality, we should expect to be something as like to that reality as in the nature of the case it is possible for it to be; something that would naturally point to it, and picture it out, and so in itself be a sort of parable of it, and a parable simple and easy for all men to understand.

Such outward signs are admirably provided for the purpose in the water of Baptism, and the Bread and Wine of the Lord's Supper. What is the use of water outwardly applied to the body? Is it not to wash away all filth? What is the spiritual meaning of Baptism? Is it not the

washing away of sin? "Arise," said Ananias to Saul, "and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Acts xxii. 16.

There is a remarkable Greek inscription round the font in St. Mary's Church, Nottingham, copied, I believe, from an ancient Greek church, remarkable in this that whichever way you read its letters they make the same words,

νιψον ανομηματα μη μοναν οψιν.

It expresses both the outward and inward of what is ordained to take place there. "Wash your sins, not your face only."

Could any outward and visible thing be a more suggestive sign of the forgiving and cleansing away of our sin than washing by water?

The Bread and Wine of the Lord's Supper are as simple and suggestive. What is the use of bread and wine? Is it not to feed, sustain, strengthen, refresh us? And what are the spiritual benefits of the Lord's Supper? Are they not the strengthening and refreshing of our souls?

These signs then are in their simplicity and in their adaptation to the purpose for which they are ordained, the best possible.

They are ordained as *signs of grace;*

"outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace." What is *Grace?* God's mercy given gratis; given without our having done anything to deserve it. And this mercy which God gives gratis is, first of all, the mercy of forgiveness to the sinner, and then the mercy of strength and refreshment to the forgiven.

That God does for Christ's sake give this mercy gratis—the mercy of forgiveness, and the mercy of refreshment, to those who are rightly disposed to receive it—is the very key-note of the Gospel, the glad tidings of great joy to all who will believe and accept it. It is proclaimed from the first to the last page of the New Testament in every variety of language; and it is stamped as on a visible deed of conveyance, easy to read, and simple to be understood of all, in the Sacraments of Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.

II. And this brings us to the *second* point we have to consider, namely the ordaining of these signs as means and pledges by Christ Himself.

Of course no outward thing like water, or bread, or wine, can of itself convey to us anything more than in its own nature it contains. But if appointed to do so, if

ordained by Christ Himself to be a channel of His gifts, it is impossible for us to say that it cannot.

We may not be able to understand how outward things are able to become means or channels for the conveyance of spiritual things; but in fact all spiritual things are conveyed to us through the instrumentality of outward ones. The written word is something outward; the spoken word is something outward; the warnings alike and the promises, the arguments and reasonings which excite our interest in spiritual things, convince us of their reality, and incline us to receive them, are all *outward;* and if not visible to the eye are intelligible to one or other of the senses of the man.

And Christ has ordained the water of Baptism and the Bread and Wine of the Lord's Supper, which in themselves are nothing more than water, and bread and wine, to be the means of conveying grace, and a pledge that it is conveyed to those who rightly receive them. Of course whatever is such a means and pledge can only be so when ordained by Him who is Himself the fountain of grace, and has the power to convey it.

The gas pipes in our churches and houses are the *means* of conveying light to us.

They are not such by any power of their own to produce light, but only by special provision when they are connected with the gasometer on the one hand and the burners on the other; they are only a means of light by virtue of their being ordained to be so by those who have power over the gas. And the water of Baptism and the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper only become means of grace to us by being ordained for such a purpose by Christ Himself, who is the Lord of all grace.

Again, the *deed of conveyance* of an estate is a means of making over an estate from one person to another, because the law of the land has so appointed it. It is not the estate itself, but it represents it and conveys it. And thus by the appointment of Christ Himself the water in Baptism conveys to the penitent believer the washing away of his sins; and the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper become to him in effect all that is meant by the words, "the Body and Blood of Christ." What that is we shall see in the next address.

There may be in such means of conveying grace much more than we can explain or understand. But if we may assume that grace usually is conveyed to us by natural rather than supernatural means,

and enters our souls by the ordinary rather than by any extraordinary channels; then repentance is that which prepares us for its reception, and faith that which actually receives it: and Sacraments are means of grace in that they manifestly set forth Christ crucified among us and given to us, thus exciting repentance, quickening faith, and intensifying all means and capabilities of receiving the grace which God at all times and in all ways is ever waiting to pour out upon us.

But we speak of the "outward and visible sign" in the Sacraments as being not only "the means of grace," but "a pledge to assure us thereof."

A pledge is something visible that we can look at, and by doing so assure ourselves of the reality of that which it pledges.

Such a pledge is a marriage ring. It is a token and assurance of the reality of the marriage. No woman looking at her marriage ring could entertain a doubt of her marriage.

We want to be assured of God's love to, and union with, us in Christ; for we are very suspicious. Sin makes us suspicious and doubtful even of His love. We often have such questionings as these: "Did the Son of God really become incarnate?" "Did

He really die in the flesh?" "Did He die for me?" "May I really appropriate Him, His merits, His work, Himself crucified and risen, to myself, as my salvation?"

Here, then, in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is the very assuring token and pledge which we need. Here is a simple institution which has come down from our Saviour's own time, and by His own appointment. Here is the bread broken, the picture of the broken body of Christ. Here is the wine poured out, the symbol of His shed blood. And here is God's minister acting in God's name, singling out each one and saying, "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life; take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on Him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving."

It is a pledge than which none can be stronger, to assure us that Christ has become incarnate, that Christ's body was broken, Christ's blood poured out for us, for each one of us, for thee and for me.

There is another answer in the Church Catechism to which in this place I wish to call attention. The question is, "What is the outward part in the Lord's Supper?" and the answer, "Bread and Wine, which

the Lord hath commanded to be received."

This command is recorded by St. Matthew xxvi. 26—29; St. Mark xiv. 22—25; St. Luke xxii. 19, 20, and St. Paul, 1 Cor. xi. 23—34.

But why does our Church call special attention to this command with reference to the *outward sign* of the bread and wine? Clearly to meet the objections of those who think that they can do without Sacraments. There are some, we know, who spiritualise all these commands, and believe they can feed upon Christ and live in union with Him better without the outward sign than with it. And there are others who for various reasons shrink from coming to the Lord's Supper, though as far as men can judge, they are in other respects living Christian lives. Let them all remember that "The Lord hath commanded the bread and wine to be received." And do you, especially, who are just going to be confirmed remember it, and begin at once, and as long as you live maintain the habit of being regular communicants. Your Confirmation is the step that leads you on to Communion, and if you do not take that step now you will never have so happy an opportunity as long as you live. The Lord has com-

manded it; and the King's command is enough for a loyal subject's guidance; His serious entreaty should be more than enough for a loving Christian's obedience. If you have difficulties, take means to overcome those difficuities. They are not insuperable. If sin prevents you, give up your sin; it is far better surely to do so than to give up your soul or your Saviour. If scruples are in your way and you cannot quiet your conscience, go to your clergyman and let him help you. At all events be determined, for the Lord has commanded it, and difficulties and objections will disappear.

VIII.

SACRAMENTS.

II.—"THE INWARD AND SPIRITUAL GRACE."

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II.—"THE INWARD AND SPIRITUAL GRACE."

A SACRAMENT is defined by our Church to be "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ Himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof."

In the last address I dwelt upon the "outward sign," and its appointment by Christ to be a means of conveying to us the inward grace, and a pledge to assure us of its conveyance. I now come to consider the other part of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, "the inward and spiritual grace given unto us."

This is a subject on which there have been many disputes, but our Church Catechism has put the whole gist of the matter in a few words; and we shall be saved much difficulty if we simply adhere to that explanation. There are two questions and answers upon the subject.

1. What is the inward part or thing signified in the Lord's Supper?

"The Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper."

2. What are the benefits whereof we are partakers thereby?

"The strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the Body and Blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the Bread and Wine."

I. Now, first of all, let me ask you to keep clearly in mind that what is here spoken of as "the Body and Blood of Christ" has been previously declared to be something "inward and spiritual."

A Sacrament is "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace . . . ." Well, the outward and visible sign is "Bread and Wine," that which we can see and feel and take in our hands, and feed our bodies with: "the inward and spiritual grace" that which we cannot see, and can

only receive, and feed our souls upon by faith, is "the Body and Blood of Christ."

But in what sense, then, can "Body and Blood," which properly describe "outward and visible" things, be used to express only "inward and spiritual" ones? And further, why does our Church add that this "Body and Blood of Christ" are *verily and indeed* taken and received by the faithful, when they are taken not literally but in a spiritual sense?

I think that if you carefully consider the words you will see that none other could so well, so briefly, so pointedly, so fully, convey their meaning.

The question is not so much what the "Body and Blood of Christ" are in themselves, but what they are to us. What do they represent, what in the Lord's Supper do they convey to us?

The words, "The Body and Blood of Christ" represent to us that the Eternal Son of God took our flesh upon Him and became possessed of a Body; that he lived as man in this Body, and died as man, shedding His Blood upon the Cross; and the offer of the Body and Blood of Christ to us represents the offer of all that by His Incarnation, His Life, His Death, His Resurrection, and Ascension, He has

wrought out for us. It is the offer of Himself, all that He is, and all that He has done, to us. Could any other words tell us all this so well?

And if we further ask why our Church expresses it so strongly as to say that "the Body and Blood of Christ are *verily* and *indeed* taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper," the answer and the explanation is, that this is the highest and truest meaning of "the Body and Blood of Christ" for us. Just as our Saviour Himself said, "My flesh is meat *indeed*" (John vi. 55), and "I am the *true* (or *very*) vine" (John xv. 1), so our Church says, "The Body and Blood of Christ are *verily* and *indeed* taken and received by the faithful," that is, in their highest and truest sense. If His actual Body, His very flesh and blood were eaten and drunk by us, that would not be so real and true a reception of Christ, if indeed it would be a reception at all, as is this. It might be a literal reception of His body, but it would not be a spiritual reception of Himself, "*verily and indeed taken.*" The spirit is only fed, can only be fed, by what a spirit can receive with its understanding, affections, and conscience. A spirit cannot feed on actual flesh and blood.

Our Church evidently assumes that some food, and that food of the highest spiritual kind, *is* received by the *faithful* in the Lord's Supper; and so does our Saviour Himself. For if He had intended by it no more than a bare commemoration, it would have been enough for Him to say "Eat this bread broken," "Drink this wine poured out, in remembrance of Me": there could have been no further need to add in that strong emphatic manner, "This is My Body; This is My Blood." And though these words cannot mean the actual "Body and Blood" of the Lord which hung upon the cross eighteen hundred years ago, yet we must give them as high a meaning as the nature of the case admits of. They are His Body and Blood in spiritual effect and use to us. They represent and convey Him, living and dying for us, to our souls, enlightening our understanding, attracting our affections, satisfying our conscience.

II. This comes out even more clearly in the next question and answer.

"What are the benefits whereof we are partakers thereby?"

"The strengthening and refreshing of our SOULS by the Body and Blood of Christ,

as our bodies are" (strengthened) "by the Bread and Wine."

The benefits are, then, "the strengthening and refreshing of our *souls*." But souls require spiritual food for their refreshment. And this *spiritual* food is here called "the Body and Blood of Christ."

Be sure there is no magic in this. The soul of man does not get fed of God by a man merely coming to His table and receiving a morsel of bread and a drop of wine. Feeding is a reality to the soul as to the body. The soul, like the body, has its food, its faculty for receiving it, its power of assimilating it to itself. It has, too, its hunger and its thirst, without which it will not care for its food.

Let us try to realise the soul feeding at the Lord's Supper, and see how it comes to pass.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was ordained, we are told, "For the continual remembrance of the *sacrifice* of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby."

This, then, is the great thought for our souls to contemplate as we approach the Holy Table,—"the *sacrifice* of the death of Christ,"—not merely "the death of Christ," but "the full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice,

oblation, and satisfaction, which He then made for the sins of the whole world, whereby alone we obtain remission of our sins, and are made partakers of the kingdom of heaven."

This great thought is vividly presented to us in our Service. The Bread is broken before our eyes; the Wine poured out. "Before our eyes Jesus Christ is evidently set forth, crucified among us;" and we are invited to eat of His Sacrifice. We *may* think of this at all times; we *must* now, when it is as it were all present as on Calvary again. And what reflections are likely to arise while the Bread and Wine are thus before our eyes, and while these words are being sounded in our ears?—

"Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who of Thy tender mercy didst give Thine only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the Cross for our redemption; who made there (by His one oblation of Himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; and did institute, and in His holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that His precious death, until His coming again; Hear us, O merciful Father, we most humbly beseech Thee, and grant that we receiving these Thy

creatures of bread and wine, according to Thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of His death and passion, may be partakers of His most blessed Body and Blood: who, in the same night that He was betrayed, took bread; and, when He had given thanks, He brake it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, Take, eat, this is My Body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me. Likewise after Supper he took the Cup, and, when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of this; for this is My Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins: Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of Me."

What reflections, I say, are likely to arise in our minds as we see the Bread and Wine, or hear these words? Something surely of this kind—

"The Eternal Son of God, very God of very God, made man, living, dying, dying a slave's death upon the cross; those tender hands pierced with rough nails, that forehead of Him who is God Himself, all torn and bleeding from that mock crown of thorns; He Himself, His whole soul and body, shaken to His very centre, and exclaiming, 'My God, My God, why hast

Thou forsaken Me?' And all this, too, for *sinners*, 'God commending His love unto us, that while we were sinners Christ died for us;' yet while we were yet *sinners*. We then, *I* then, had a share in that horrible tragedy; I, by my sins, helped to press that crown upon His head, to fasten those nails into His feet and hands; aye, and I, too, by virtue only of the same fact that I am a sinner, have an interest in the glorious issue of that event—He died *for sinners*."

There is some food for thought there, something to put the soul in its proper state of penitence before the cross, something, too, to arouse and call out its faith—that He who, at such a cost, made a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, made therefore a sacrifice for me. For if He died for all He died for *me*. Oh, that I could be sure of this. Oh, that I could receive the benefit of this. Oh, that I could appropriate and make my own this sacrifice, this Body and Blood of Christ.

This is the arising of a spiritual appetite for Him; a hunger which He Himself has promised shall be satisfied.

What follows in our Service? There comes to the penitent's ears the constant repetition of those striking words: "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was

given for thee, the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life." He looks up. He sees the Minister of God giving by God's command, "the bread and the wine" to each one, one by one, as he repeats the words. He hears exactly what he craves, the offer of "Christ's Body and Christ's Blood," made one by one to individuals. He is helped to believe that if it is for this one and for that one it is certainly also for *him;* and he, too, takes it by faith and feeds thereby, he believes, on Christ. He is strengthened and refreshed by the Body and Blood of Christ as his body is by the bread and wine. The body receives the refreshment it needs and *can* receive, and in the *way* it can receive it, bread and wine. The soul receives the refreshment it needs and can receive, spiritual refreshment; and in the way it can receive it, by faith.

What sort of spiritual refreshment does the faithful communicant thus receive?

He is in doubt whether he may claim Christ as his very own. Here Christ is offered to him as if he were the only soul in the world, and offered in a way to inspire confidence and give rest. He is in fear lest being so sinful he may not hope for pardon.

Here Christ is set forth as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, as dying a propitiation for all sinners, and therefore a sacrifice for *his* sins, a propitiation for *him* a sinner. He is alone, and therefore weak indeed in his conflicts with sin; here, and by this means and in this way, Christ comes to him, and dwells in him, he becomes one with Christ, and Christ one with him. He is in low spirits, wanting the peace and the joy which a Christian should have, not able to realise Christ as near, hardly able to realise Him as his Saviour at all. Here is the assurance of His being very near, even in his very soul, to cheer, refresh, and comfort him.

Thus the benefits of the Lord's Supper are "the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the Body and Blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine."

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper sets before us the reception of Christ into our souls under the image of eating and drinking. I need hardly say that we do not eat or drink heartily unless we are hungry and thirsty; what we need, then, when we are coming to the Lord's Supper is hunger and thirst after Christ, and that not merely to obtain His forgiveness, but to be trans-

formed into His likeness. This is the highest longing that man can have, and man is by his true nature so great that without satisfaction of this he cannot be satisfied at all. All other things are nothing in comparison. A world is not enough for us when we really hunger and thirst after God, desiring to be like Him, and thus as pure and good and noble as man can be, and so to enjoy God. But who shall give us this hunger? How shall this thirst be excited? Of course it is God's gift; but God gives by certain laws. How, for instance, do we obtain an appetite for daily food? Not merely by thinking of it, or by wishing for it, but by heartily doing the work appointed us without thinking of the appetite at all. In due time it comes.

Are you a Christian, then, and yet have little hunger after Christ? Well, do at least, and do as well as you can, the first Christian works that come in your path of duty. Begin your day with fervent prayer, and go about your daily work as a Christian trying to act in all your dealings as for Christ. Maintain this course if you can for a day You will soon feel your need of Christ's pardon, of Christ's help, of Christ Himself, of all He is, and all He may be, to

your soul. You will hunger and thirst after Him: and hunger and thirst look for ways of satisfying themselves; and spiritual hunger and thirst will find their satisfaction only in "the Body and Blood of Christ."

IX.

SELF-EXAMINATION.

SELF-EXAMINATION.

1 Cor. xi. 28.

"Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup."

IT is a very common saying indeed, and it is felt even more commonly than it is said, that "Every one wants looking after." Men appoint overlookers in their places of work, but they overlook their overlookers themselves. They keep, it may be, their own accounts; but they submit them from time to time to an accountant, to be sure that they have correctly kept them. They have confidence, perhaps, in all upon their premises, and believe that all is conducted in their house with honesty; but they take stock of their goods every year at least, to prove by actual examination how their affairs stand. For

they do not doubt but that if any man neglected to examine the state of his business, kept no accounts, took no stock, it would very soon go wrong; errors and mistakes would creep in, dishonesty would be encouraged, little losses would lead to great ones, and suddenly, when the man thought himself in the midst of prosperity, he would find himself utterly ruined.

Is it not to be expected that that overlooking which is so necessary in all our earthly concerns, should be even more necessary in our spiritual ones? If our goods need examining, do not *we* ourselves? And yet this superintendence, this overlooking, is hardly thought of. It is the advice of the wise man, says Coleridge in his Aids to Reflection: "*Dwell* at home," that is with yourself, but the greater part of mankind cannot be persuaded even to *visit* themselves *sometimes*. And yet to do so, is one of the highest faculties we have. Self-superintendence! That any thing should overlook itself! It is a paradox indeed, very hard to understand; but yet most truly has it been said—

> "Unless above himself he can
> Erect himself, how mean a thing is man."

The words of St. Paul before us bid us thus

examine ourselves, watch ourselves, and report to ourselves where we are, and how we are going on.

The occasion on which St. Paul here especially commands Self-Examination is that of coming to the Lord's Supper; and I close this set of addresses on the Confirmation subjects with this, the last sentence of our Church's instruction in the Catechism on the subject.

"What is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper?"

"To examine themselves, whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life; have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ with a thankful remembrance of His death, and be in charity with all men."

This is a very wide subject. To examine oneself as to any one "subtle bosom sin"; to keep one's mind at it, not to shirk the disagreeable discovery, but to track one's sin home, and there to face it, and with it all uncovered to face God, would be enough, and more than enough, if fully described and illustrated, for the time allotted to one of these addresses. But I must endeavour to combine some general with some particular instruction in this matter.

St. Paul, I have said, connects the duty

of self-examination with the Lord's Supper, and it is well indeed to have some special time set apart for a duty which otherwise we are inclined, from time to time, to put off. He has, however, another very strong remark upon it. "Examine yourselves," he writes, "whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

I. The words of the Church's instruction in the Catechism will guide us very much in this inquiry. She bids us examine ourselves on three points, which form the essentials of Christian character:—

1. "Whether we repent us truly of our former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life."

Recollect that "sins" includes not only what you have done that you ought not to have done, but what you have left undone that you ought to have done; and recollect also that your *best* service is altogether due to Almighty God—and what a swarm of words that you might have spoken, and deeds that you might have done; of desires ill desired, of words ill spoken, of deeds ill done, arise and thicken in your view!

Let us suppose ourselves entering upon

this investigation. Those who have the opportunity will go to their own rooms and shut the door, securing a time when they can be alone with their God. Those who cannot have such privacy must try and make such opportunity by an effort, as they walk along the streets, or in the country, or where it should be possible for all, in the ever open church of their parish. Let us then and there try to shut out all other sights and all other thoughts but those of our own souls and of our Saviour God. Let us, if possible, fall on our knees; let us, with humbled souls, pray—"Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid—Thou God who seest me, who art about my path, and about my bed, and spiest out all my ways—show me myself, help me to see myself as Thou seest me, and to know my sins as Thou knowest them, and to be sorry for them as Thou wouldest have me be sorry, in whose presence there is joy over *one* sinner that repenteth." Then in the Lord's own presence, and asking His help, let us compare commandment after commandment, as explained in "The Duty towards God," and the "Duty towards our neighbour," with our own life, till we face our most besetting sin

be it what it may—perhaps of ungodliness and irreverence, perhaps of want of love, perhaps of intemperance, perhaps of dishonesty, or untruthfulness, perhaps of indolence and selfishness. Let us uncover it and look it well in the face; let us take away the excuses we are ever making for it. Let us hear God speak, and conscience speak; and then let us ask, "Do I truly repent of this, as of all other sins? Do I steadfastly purpose to give it up and lead a new life? We *can* tell this.

2. Let us go on to the next point of examination, whether we "have a lively faith in God's mercy, through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of His death."

If we have little or no repentance, we may be sure we shall equally have little or no faith. If sin is not a burden to us, if we are not anxious about it, if we do not fear to distress our Saviour by disobedience, we shall not be anxious to rest on Him and cling to Him by faith. But if we are "steadfastly purposing to lead a new life," the very suggestion that we may "have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ" is encouraging. The command to examine ourselves, whether we have such faith, is a strong inducement to us to have it. For it amounts to this, "Those who are best able

to teach me evidently expect this of me; then God in His mercy, I am sure, wills me thus to trust Him." Wherefore half trembling, yet half trusting, I will say, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief." Thus, step by step, the examination of ourselves leads us to bless God with our hearts for what He has done for us in Christ, and to trust Him with a lively trust for what He may yet do to save us. And I think we can tell this too, namely, whether we have taken and cast our souls for life and for death on Jesus Christ, and are resting on Him for pardon, peace, strength, and eternal life.

3. The third point of Christian character which we are to test is, "Whether we be in charity with all men"; forgiving and loving as we hope to be forgiven and loved. This is a question, too, that we surely can decide. But we must be quite honest with ourselves, or we shall not decide aright. I have heard it said, "Oh, yes, I forgive; but I cannot forget. I cannot ever again have anything to do with such a person." But if any one compares the expression in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us" with this measure of forgiveness, he will see that it is no forgiveness at all.

Conceive what it would be to us if God said, "I forgive them, but will never again have anything to do with them."

II. But further, self-examination is not only for the beginning of Christian life, nor only when we approach the Lord's Supper for the first time or at any time, but for every stage of Christian life, indeed for every day of Christian life, to ascertain and be clearly conscious how we are going on.

We are all too much in the habit of taking things for granted in matters of religion; and even when we have really turned to God we are in the same danger. We are then inclined to take for granted that all will be well for ever, and so to neglect the watchfulness which then as much as ever is required of us, for we shall certainly go back if we do not go forward in religion as in all else. Men are not satisfied in business to know that they have got a competency: they want to get more each year, and to know that they have got it, and they take effectual means to know it. They are interested in the matter, and their steps are definitely marked and their progress definitely known.

But vagueness, indefiniteness, want of clear knowledge, and absence of clearly-

marked steps of progress, are common faults of Christians. And they will hardly be removed but by definite and regular self-examination upon definite besetting sins, or definitely clear but half-neglected or feebly-performed duties.

Let us consider one or two instances. There is no Christian probably who does not recognise the duty of private prayer and study of the Holy Scriptures. And yet I am convinced that God, who knows all things, could call up from amongst almost any congregation many an one with a fair Christian reputation, many a communicant even, whose private prayers and whose study of the Holy Scriptures are very brief, very shallow, often omitted altogether, and never very earnest.

This results partly from indolence, and self-indulgence, partly from a want of taste for the Holy Scriptures, brought on very often by exciting rather than useful reading. It is felt to be too great an effort to rise early enough in the morning to secure the first and best half-hour for communion with God. As the day goes on business or pleasure thrusts everything else out; and at night the mind and the body also are too wearied for what needs fixed and earnest attention. Here then

is a habit of indolence to be overcome, a habit of devotion to be acquired. From week to week and from day to day you may test and examine yourself, whether you are overcoming the one, whether you are putting on the other. You have often been overcome; are you overcoming now?

Or, to take another instance, all of us know, who ever try to pray, how very hard it is to pray really. Our public worship, what is it? We listen to the singing, we follow some of the prayers; but continually we catch our thoughts wandering far away; we are thinking of anything but God and His love, and his readiness to help us: yesterday's occupation, to-morrow's hope, our friends, our homes, anything, no matter how trifling, has arrested and occupied our hearts. Do we acquiesce in this? We know it takes place. Do we review it at night? Do we humble ourselves for it, and strive to overcome it, and make records of our conquests or our failures? If our self-superintendence is a reality, we shall do so, and we shall grow in the spirit of devotion. Our thoughts will wander less; our hearts will be less cold. Or, at all events, we shall be clearly conscious, reminded continually by ourselves, that we pray as ill and as little as

ever, that we are going backwards, and are in danger. So we shall make new efforts.

Or, to take a different kind of example, we are bound to be in charity with all men. A large part of that charity has its sphere at home: it is shown in loving-temper, in kind manner, in gentle words to all there, from father to son, husband to wife, mother to daughter, sister to sister; and a vast deal of the happiness of the home depends upon it. Now Christian people do not always show this sweet loving charity at home; and they are sometimes conscious of it. Here again is a definite part of oneself to overlook with the possibility of marking definite improvement. Self-examination will call up the remembrance of each day's temptations to unkindness, and each day's resistance or yielding to it. And the record of self-examination will show whether we are overcoming this sin or whether it is overcoming us.

Unless we make our self-examination thus definite and practical, it will be of little use to us, and indeed, I am confident, it will be little used by us. It is one of those hard, unpleasant duties which a man will not do unless he is in real earnest about it. There is nothing which the heart is

more inclined to shirk. It requires, as you well know who have tried it, all a man's determination to keep to it. The thoughts will wander, the mind will plead its inability for the work, and he only will do it who is determined to have it done, and who in that determination casts himself in faith on God and cries, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. cxxxix. 24).

THE END.

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